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ABSTRACT

Five local collaborative efforts in several Northwest states addressed the problems created by worker dislocation in unique ways. Each partnership involved educational agencies and other key actors such as employers, organized labor, and government agencies. When the Department of Labor awarded a dislocated worker retraining demonstration grant to the Mid-Willamette Jobs Council (Salem, Oregon), it merged with a project of Chemeketa Community College. The college became the retraining institution, with the Job Assistance Network providing other job assistance services. When Scott Paper Company closed a division in Northwest Washington, representatives of the company, the National Alliance of Business, and the International Workers of America local planned the Skagit/Snohomish Dislocated Worker Assistance Project. Workers received help in job search methods through workshops and support services. The labor movement responded to projected layoffs in Montana's lumber and natural resource development industries with "Project Challenge: Work Again." Efforts focused on older workers with few job-seeking skills. When Idaho faced the loss of several large employers, the Consortium of Area Vocational Education Schools sponsored a workshop for dislocated workers. The King County (Washington) Unemployed Committee developed the "Unemployment Resource Guide" to provide information and list sources of information and assistance. (YLB)

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MEETING THE CHALLENGE:

Northwestern Communities Move to Help Dislocated Workers

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

While most of the nation in 1984 enjoyed the return of jobs and at least a moderate economic recovery, much of the Northwest still wrestled with the impact of heavy unemployment. Earlier Ideas for Action in 1983 profiled the impact of work dislocation on individuals and communities based on NWREL research in six communities as well as personal data-gathering from older workers suddenly out of a job. These activities were supported by funds from the National Institute of Education.

This issue portrays five unique ways local collaborative efforts in several Northwest states have addressed the problems created by worker dislocation. Each partnership involved educational agencies as well as other key actors such as employers, organized labor, government agencies and a variety of other "helping" organizations. Each is briefly described here because they represent pioneer practice and not just ideas someone theorized might work.

The Job Assistance Network: Collaboration Works

As the economy worsened in October 1982, the Mid-Willamette Jobs Council, serving a three-county area surrounding Salem, Oregon, began the Job Assistance Network. The project was one of six demonstration sites selected by the Department of Labor to implement a program of services to dislocated workers. It was timed to enable the community to respond to the layoffs of more than 675 workers from plants in the towns of Salem, Monmouth and Camp Adair. These and many smaller layoffs had caused the unemployment rate to climb. It ultimately exceeded 11.2 percent and many workers left the area in the belief that lost jobs would never return.

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IDEAS FOR ACTION in Education and Work

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

September 1984

Chemeketa Community College had been concerned about the problem for some time and had begun to explore ways of linking dislocated workers with vocational skill training and other college services. The concern had resulted in a project to create a Cooperative Career and Economic Development Center that involved business and government with the college. When the Department of Labor awarded a dislocated worker retraining demonstration grant to the Mid-Willamette Jobs Council, the two projects merged.

The Job Assistance Network was offered free office space and support services by Chemeketa Community College. The college became the retraining institution with the Network providing outreach and recruitment, screening, orientation, assessment, job search workshops, and job placement assistance. Use of the Resource Center was also available to clients. As a part of collaboration with the broader community, non-Network clients were able to audit the job search workshops and to use the Resource Center.

While the Network was demonstrating effective job search support activities, the college was demonstrating that it could provide effective short-term training. As a result of the demonstration, the college now offers short-term training in electronic technology, computer operations and computer-assisted drafting--programs originally begun for Network clients.

A problem faced by the Job Assistance Network was the inability of clients, under existing Oregon State Employment Service policy, to collect unemployment insurance benefits while retraining. After two months of discussions with state legislators, a bill was passed removing this restriction.
After analyzing the local labor market, Network staff concluded that the skills of their clients were in greater demand outside of the three county area. Despite this knowledge, most clients were unwilling to relocate. Because of this, staff placed greater emphasis on the transferable skills needed by employers outside the timber products occupations. This strategy appears to have paid off: the Network achieved a 60.7 percent placement rate at a cost of $2,349 per placement.

For additional information, contact the Mid-Willamette Jobs Council, (503) 371-2382.

Skagit/Snohomish Dislocated Worker Assistance Project:

Viable Options for Displaced Workers

The timber products industry has been the second largest in Washington State. But in recent years, upward of 15,000 jobs have been lost. Most of these are gone forever.

Early in 1984, Scott Paper Company closed its Northwest Timberland Division in Northwest Washington. This action would displace 300 loggers and lumber workers. Once the decision was announced, representatives of the company, the National Alliance of Business, and the International Woodworkers of America, Local 3-101, sat down to plan a Worker Assistance Project. With State of Washington Title III Program and local Employment Security resources, the partnership launched an employment and interest survey of all 300 employees.

As might be expected, survey results indicated that going back to work was the workers' greatest concern. Workers also wanted and needed a salary range roughly equivalent to that they had received at Scott. Some workers were interested in retraining and some needed brush-up and remedial education. With this information in hand, project planners designed streamlined training that would accommodate as many of the workers as possible and get them back to work in time to avoid severe financial crises.
About 225 workers were served. Those who were most job-ready received labor market information, job leads and help in putting resumes together. Those who had little exposure to job search strategies or how to "brush up" their occupational skills, participated in a modified "job club" workshop aimed at promoting self-directed job search. The union provided ongoing assistance with unemployment insurance claims and health and pension benefit questions. Job Resource Rooms were available to all workers and contained a job opening board, training information

from local colleges, veterans' programs information, telephones, newspapers, career handbooks and occupational information.

Workshops included skill assessment, economic outlook information, job search techniques, practice in interviewing and resume writing.

Local colleges and Employment Security provided staff to meet with workers to discuss retraining opportunities. Small business start-up workshops were also available to interested individuals. Classes for GED preparation and Adult Basic Education were provided.

Support services included transportation to job sites, car repair and relocation assistance. Through referrals, counseling was available for those facing financial crisis, health or personal and marital problems.

High placement results are a testimony to the success of this partnership approach. The placement wage rate was $11.67 and 73 percent of the 225 participants enrolled were placed in unsubsidized employment. The per placement cost was $751.00.

Targeted job development was a strong contributor to the success of this project as were the early notification of the closure by Scott and the timely response of the union and the NAB regional office.

For additional information, contact Rueben Flores, National Alliance of Business, Pacific Northwest Office, Seattle, Washington. (206) 622-2531

Project Challenge: Work Again

Montana's lumber and natural resource development industries have been hard-hit by the recession, by technological changes and by plant closures and business failures. These traditionally strong industries had employed many people who had spent most or all of their working life--as many as 20 or 30 years--in the same industry, often with the same company. For some of these workers, it was impossible to believe that the layoffs would be permanent and that plants were closing forever. Few workers thought they should do any serious job hunting outside these industries.

The labor movement responded to the projected layoffs with Project Challenge: Work Again. In 1981, the Helena office of the AFL-CIO Human Resource Development Institute (HRDI) and the Montana Department of Labor/Job Service (now the Montana Department of Labor and Industry) joined forces in an effort to help workers displaced by the Anaconda Minerals Company closures in Anaconda, Great Falls and Butte, and by Evans Products in Missoula. The union and the state agreed that union involvement would help persuade the dislocated workers that their jobs would not return, and that the time had come to begin considering career alternatives and to make difficult adjustments in their lives. Heavy industry could no longer be looked to for employment and local small businesses offered the most opportunity for those unwilling to relocate.

Most of the affected workers were older. They had heavy family and financial responsibilities. With few job-seeking skills for today's changing job market they encountered barriers to reemployment not found among participants of other reemployment programs. The stress of sudden unemployment often puts this group at high risk of experiencing both emotional and physiological problems. The union and the state focused their efforts on this difficult-to-employ group, with the goal of helping them find new employment at wages that would allow them to support their families.

With funding under JTPA Title III, project participants are offered the following services:

- Assessment to prepare for self-directed career analysis
- One week of classroom training including skills analysis, resume preparation, interviewing skills, employability plan development and motivational training
- Confidence building to overcome employment barriers
- Job counseling and job referrals
- Support groups

- Training to increase skill marketability
- Relocation assistance as needed

The project has proven itself successful. Over the three years it has operated, it has achieved a 74 percent placement rate with an average wage at placement of $6.50 per hour. The cost per placement is $925.

Another measure of the success of "Project Challenge: Work Again's" approach is its inclusion as a component in the Rocky Mountain Work Project funded by the U.S. Labor Department. The Rocky Mountain project, also operated by HRDI of the AFL-CIO, serves the states of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. Other program components include Layoff Survival Workshops and a research effort aimed at gathering information that will foster coordinated and effective responses to plant closures and massive layoffs.

For more information about these projects, contact:

Candice Brown, Field Representative
Human Resources Development Institute
AFL-CIO
P.O. Box 1176
1228 Eleventh Avenue
Helena, Montana 59624-1176
(406) 443-5370

Consortium of Area Vocational Education Schools (CAVES)

In 1983 and 1984, the state of Idaho faced the loss of several large employers. Workers who lost their jobs when the plants closed found their skills had become obsolete outside their former employers' walls. Many of these long-tenured workers were facing major changes in lifestyle as a result of sudden unemployment.

Idaho State University and the other member institutions of CAVES, the employer, the Boilermakers Union and the Idaho Job Service joined forces to respond to the layoff problem. Recognizing that a fast response was critical, the group went to work. Within a week of the announcement, Idaho State University sponsored a workshop for dislocated workers and their families. The day-long workshop was aimed at reducing emotional stress and the problems that result from it. It was also intended to help give direction to dislocated workers' efforts in their own behalf.

The panel format of the workshop offered a good way to heighten awareness in the community of the dislocated workers' plight. It also stimulated the community leadership to become actively involved in helping the unemployed.

The first panel, titled "Jobs," discussed local and regional labor market information and resources for retraining. Unemployment insurance benefits were explained as well as support services available to jobseekers through the Job Service offices such as testing, linkages with other labor market areas and local job listings. Job Opportunity Groups, to help workers improve their job-seeking skills and job retention skills, were also discussed. CAVES representatives talked about JTPA-supported retraining options and the statewide system that offers flexibly-scheduled and designed training in 140 occupational areas. CAVES institutions were also offering academic counseling and tutoring, financial counseling and personal counseling, along with job placement assistance.

The Southeast Idaho Council of Governments presented information about the economic development activities in the region and what those activities will mean for future jobs.

Managing finances was the central theme of the second panel. The panel brought together bankers and loan managers in a discussion of how workers could protect their credit and home mortgages during their unemployment. Part of this session dealt with repossession rights and processes. Individual consumer credit counseling and financial planning assistance were offered.

Social services were presented by a third panel. The Area Agency on Aging stepped forward to explain services they provide to individuals age 60 and over. These

included homemaker services, nutrition programs, ombudsman and legal services, transportation and information and referral. Employment assistance and legal services (with the Idaho State Bar Association) were made available to individuals age 55 and over. Mental health services for adults and children, the food stamp program, community-based social services and church-supported community helping activities were described to the dislocated workers and their families.

The afternoon session featured a stress management workshop to help workers anticipate and understand emotional stresses and pressures of unemployment and learn techniques that help relieve the stress. Because stress is so intense during early phases of layoff, coordinators have decided to make this workshop the first agenda item in future dislocated worker assistance efforts.

The AFL-CIO's Human Resources Development Institute and the union locals all pitched in to help identify reemployment options and sources of relocation assistance.

In all, workshop sponsors and participants felt the sessions were useful and well-timed. Those interested in additional information should contact:

Dr. Gordon F. Jones
School of Vocational-Technical Education
Idaho State University
Pocatello, ID 93209
(208) 236-0211

Unemployment Resource Guide: When Workers Don't Know Where to Turn

The Seattle and Tacoma, Washington areas are no strangers to layoffs. In the early 1970s a major aerospace company reduced the size of its workforce substantially. Recently, the layoffs are spread across a variety of industries and the businesses that support them. Years of experience have taught the communities that one of the major problems dislocated workers confront is a lack of information--about services, about sources of job leads, about emergencies and about their rights. The King County Unemployed Committee, consisting of representatives from organized labor, community social services agencies, the education community and the unemployed themselves, got together to develop the Unemployment Resource Guide. Graduate students from the School of Social Work at the University of Washington researched and organized the information for the Guide.

Union members, the Family Services of King County, the local YWCA and the United Way assisted with financial support and information about agencies and services.

Directory sections included:

- Emergency Numbers
- When First Unemployed
  - Unemployment Compensation
  - Unions: Rights and Responsibilities
  - Starting Points
- Reemployment
  - Job Search and Upgrading
  - The Labor Market
  - Job Listings
- Time of Crisis
  - Health care
  - Financial Aid
  - Public Assistance/Food Stamps
  - Utilities
  - Housing
  - Legal
  - Counseling
  - Multi-Service Centers
- Miscellaneous
  - Barter
  - Fun Things To Do

The first sections provided tips on what to do when unemployment strikes. Unemployment insurance benefits and how to apply for them were reviewed and area Job Service Center addresses and telephone numbers were listed. The union's resources and activities were described in general terms and workers were urged to make use of them. The Reemployment section listed job banks, private industry councils and other sources of reemployment information and assistance. Each listing included a brief description of services and eligibility requirements. Hotline numbers were also published.

Copies of the Guide were distributed without charge and the content has been placed in the public domain.

For additional information about the Guide or the project that produced it, please contact:

Mark McDermott
C.A.M.P. Employment Project
(206) 329-4111

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Editor's Note:

IDEAS FOR ACTION IN EDUCATION AND WORK synthesizes information from research and practice on topics of current interest. Other titles in the series include:

Removing Barriers to CETA/School Collaboration (out of print)

Improving Learning in the Workplace

Teaching Independent Living Skills to Youth

Volunteering...Pathway to Paid Employment

Striving for Excellence: Middle Schoolers Study "Work"

Learning Responsibility: The Importance of the Home, School and Workplace

Northwesterners Out of Work: The Human Costs of Unemployment

Northwesterners Out of Work: The Effects of Job Dislocation

Choices for Migrant Youth

Out of the Classroom, Into Industry: Summer School for Teachers

Building Work Skills Through Volunteering

Striving for Excellence: Applications of Successful Business Principles

Technological Literacy Skills Everybody Should Learn

Technological Literacy: What Industry Can Offer

Meeting the Challenge: Northwestern Communities Move to Help Dislocated Workers

For further information and related reports, please contact Larry McClure, Program Director, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 300 S.W. Sixth Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97204, 1-800-547-6339 (toll free) or (503) 248-6800.

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